

Personal Independence Commission

2003 Annual Report

The Personal Independence Commission (PIC) has completed its second year of work. As established in Executive Order 01-08, signed by Governor Bob Holden, the PIC is charged with advising the Governor on necessary policy and program changes to assure that Missourians of all ages and disabilities have access to a range of community support services. The PIC includes individuals with disabilities, family members of people with disabilities, senior citizens, advocacy groups, the lieutenant governor, four members of the general assembly and representatives from the Departments of Social Services, Mental Health, Health and Senior Services and Elementary and Secondary Education.

Summary

The PIC continued work on the priorities established in 2002, which included a universal application form, an informed choice process, a guide to home and community-based services.

The PIC focused energy on "Informed Choice" this year. In a time of state budget crisis, the members believe that one of the most important tasks we can undertake is to make sure that all citizens are informed of home and community care options that will allow them to live in the least restrictive environment that will meet their needs. Home and community services are a vital component to the continuum of services and care for our citizens, and we are working to ensure that Missouri citizens are aware of these critical services. Through the development of an Informed Choice curriculum, a pilot training, and the publication of a Guide to Home and Community-Based Resources, the PIC began the process of reaching more people with disabilities and seniors who are facing choices about long term care.

Co-chairs Lieutenant Governor Joe Maxwell and Kirsten Dunham sponsored a Special Projects Team, which included the four Department Directors and was facilitated by Lois Heldenbrand. The Special Team was formed in order to identify a lead agency and a structure for implementing PIC recommendations and the Real Choice Systems Change grant. The team developed a plan of action that included lead agencies in the areas of Personal Assistance Services; Transition from Institutions to Communities; Assuring Consumer Options Based on Needs, Choices and Capacity; and Real Choice Systems Change Grant. The plan of action is attached. One of the first priorities in the action plan is to implement the use of a universal application form and a shared data system.

The charts included following the conclusion to this report indicate the division of tasks and lead agency responsibilities that were created by the interagency team facilitated by Lois Heldenbrand.

The Informed Choice work group conducted a pilot training to test the curriculum developed the previous year. Five people with disabilities from St. Louis and one parent advocate from Marshall attended the training. The parent advocate held group meetings with residents at Marshall Habilitation Center. Two of the trainees from St. Louis were able to visit people in nursing homes and refer them for transition planning. The Informed Choice work group has refined the curriculum based on the pilot trainings.

The Informed Choice Work Group is now planning to take the training statewide and focus on "training the trainer" so that there will be advocates in all parts of the state who can continue the informed choice trainings.

The work group is planning the following four training of trainers events in 2004:

- January-St. Louis
- March-southeast
- May-western Mo
- July-central Mo

In order to make sure we include the senior community and are cross-disability, the work group will reach out to a broad array of constituencies, including, but not limited to:

- AAA's
- Regional planning councils
- Independent living centers
- Ombudsmen
- DMH regional centers
- DMH habilitation centers
- MOAIDD volunteers
- MoCAN volunteers
- Self advocates from both the aging and the disability communities

The PIC also focused on making sure that people with disabilities, seniors and family members have access to information about community options before they enter a nursing home, habilitation center or other facility. The Missouri Guide to Home and Community-Based Services was created so that individuals and families could access information about all of the available services in one single document. 12,500 copies were printed and disseminated to state agencies as well as community organizations such as Centers for Independent Living, Senior Centers, Area Agencies on Aging and Regional Advisory Councils. The guide was also posted on the state web-site in order to reach as many people as possible. A second edition, including updated information, is being printed.

The PIC members as well as community advocates are volunteering to increase awareness of the Guide and available community options as members of a Speakers Bureau. The Lieutenant Governor's communications director conducted a training on making presentations, and the Elderly Advocate created a schedule of meetings and conferences of groups that relate to the disability and senior communities. Presentations have been made to numerous groups throughout the state.

The newly formed Community Education Work Group will build on the Speakers Bureau and develop additional strategies to increase public awareness of alternatives to nursing homes. The best way to prevent unnecessary institutionalization is to inform people of all their options.

Conclusion

As a result of the work of the Special Project Team and the PIC members, we have a system in place to increase our effectiveness and implement recommendations that will improve the lives of Missourians with disabilities and seniors. The combination of improved inter-agency coordination, lead agencies, and focused work-groups will make it easier to be an action-oriented commission.

In the next year, we will be focused on finishing activities in the final year of the Real Choice Systems Change grant, expanding our informed choice and community education initiatives, and moving through the action plan developed by the Special Project Team.

With the economic recession and deep cuts in the state budget, this commission has concerns for those seniors and individuals with disabilities that receive necessary services to maintain their health and well-being. During this time, we will continue to inform people of their options, streamline the application process and improve inter-agency coordination in order to best assist those individuals with disabilities and senior citizens. We plan to continue to work with the office of Governor Holden, state departments, members of the Missouri legislature, and interested groups and individuals in order to provide Missouri's seniors and citizens with disabilities with a continuum of services that allows them to live in the most appropriate and least restrictive environment.